

Sūrah 95

Al-Tīn

(The Fig)

(Makkan Period)

Title

Al-Tīn (the fig), the opening word, constitutes the *Sūrah*'s title.

Period of Revelation

Qatādah regards it as a Madīnan *Sūrah*. Two divergent opinions on this issue are ascribed to Ibn 'Abbās. According to one, it is a Makkan, and according to the other, a Madīnan *Sūrah*. However, the majority of Qur'ānic scholars take it as Makkan. One piece of internal evidence for the same is its reference to "this city (of Makkah), a haven of peace," (Verse 3). Had it been revealed in Madīnah, Makkah could not be mentioned as "this city". Moreover, its contents speak of it as an early Makkan *Sūrah*. In this respect, it makes no reference to the clash between Islam and unbelief. Its stylistic features, as for example its short, pithy statements, are the same as those of early Makkan *Sūrahs*. Finally the *Sūrah* vindicates, forcefully, the doctrine of divine recompense in the Hereafter.

Subject Matter and Themes

As already indicated, the *Sūrah* affirms divine reward and punishment. For this, oaths are first taken with reference to the sites associated with the advent of some distinguished Messengers. That man has been created in the best mould is asserted. The same truth is articulated in a variety of ways in the Qur'ān. At some places, it is pointed out that Allah made man His vicegerent on earth and ordered angels to prostrate before him (*al-Baqarah* 2: 30 and 34; *al-An'ām* 6: 165; *al-A'rāf* 7: 11; *al-Hijr* 15: 28-29; *al-Naml* 27: 62, and *Sād* 38: 71-73). At other places it is emphasized that man undertook that divine trust which the earth, heavens and mountains could not do (*al-Ahzāb* 33: 72). That He bestowed honour on the progeny of Adam and granted them excellence over many of His creatures is stated in Verse 70 of *Banī Isrā'īl*. The mention of the same truth along with the sites of the advent of some Messengers underscores that only man among all His creatures enjoys the privilege of elevation to the exalted office of Messenger.

Men are essentially of two types: (1) those who, notwithstanding being created in the best mould, are drawn towards evil and plunge into the lowest of the low abyss in their moral decay. (2) Those who, by dint of their faith and righteous deeds, shun moral degradation and attain the heights befitting their status of being created in the best mould. The division of mankind into these two types is an undeniable reality. This may be observed in every community.

Since men differ so markedly, divine recompense cannot be ruled out. If the lowest of the low are not punished and the best are not rewarded, this would mean that there is no justice in the divine scheme of things. Both human nature and common sense expect a ruler to dispense justice. Given this, it is unimaginable that Allah, the greatest of all sovereigns, will not sit in judgement.